

STEPS TO ADULTHOOD

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"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Luke 2: 40&52.

I have preached on this theme to many thousands of teenagers through my years. Here at home and in foreign countries, I have urged all to consider Luke 2:52 a vital requirement for maturing into productive adulthood. We hear preachers saying we should be like Christ. This can be accomplished by concentrating on the four areas that brought Him to maturity. Conceived by the Holy Ghost and shaped in the bosom of a special woman, he did not take long to start attracting attention of the crowd around him. There were children galore running and playing about, but Jesus was one of a kind. They that heard Him were astonished at his answers and understanding. We of course know He was the Son of God, born in a miracle, as God's gift to lost humanity. Remember also the Bible says He was human. God gave Him a body like ours with all the human desires and temptations we all face. There were some steps He took to mature in a way that pleased His Father. Let's carefully dissect Luke 2:52. The word increased (developed, grew, matured) is special for we need to follow Him in the steps that brought about His maturity. I want you to carefully consider what they were, and consider how far you are on the course to adulthood. There are four of them, and we will consider them one at a time. **(1). Mental Maturing:** "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*" Phil. 2:5. It is very clear from His birth He knew He was the Son of God. Every decision He would make would be based on the will of the Father. He allowed nothing into His mind

that would hinder the mission He had launched upon. He let nothing into His mind that would hinder the challenge He faced. From a mental standpoint he would have the right attitude and purpose in all that He did. Now put the focus on your own life and how you mentally face it. We are to cultivate that same mind of Christ, and place God's will for us above all. What does it matter if the world ridicules our feeble attempts to be Christ like? Ignore the multiple temptations of evil that swirl around you and keep your eyes on Him. Every Christian should not live to please self or man, but Jesus Christ. Are you down in the dumps with problems galore, with a mind that is warped by the world? Do selfish desires fill your soul, and the big "I" seems most important? Do you grumble and complain thinking what is the use? Have you forgotten who you are and all the great promises of God? Stop and think, better still pray, and get your heart right with God now. Confess your discouragements, get back up on your feet and stand without apology as a child of God. He will forgive you and direct your feet back to the path of mental victory. **(2). Stature:** "*What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" I Cor. 6:19&20. Now if you are a Christian consider the teaching of these verses. God's great plans are worked out by using our bodies that belong to Him, for we are His soldiers, called to do His will. That places great importance on the human body. When I was a young boy I was challenged to do nothing that would harm my use by God in my lifetime. I surrendered my body and promised to do nothing that would hurt my body. We hear much today about our health. Facts don't lie. Smoking, drinking, drugs, immorality, and many other sins can destroy anyone who ignores the danger of their results. You can

destroy your body with any sin that your body craves. As a Christian we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit living within us. He is very much like a coach to an athlete. We are in training and capable of great things accomplished for God, unless we limit our physical strength. An athlete must follow the instruction of the coach, accept his leadership, and share his goals. Repeatedly, the news tells of some sports figure who because of drugs or other sins, is disqualified for playing the game. It is impossible to sin with little regard for the results, and not grieve the Holy Spirit within. That is why we must glorify God in everything we do. Jesus as a boy knew full well why He had come to earth. He suffered no mental blocks in doing the will of His Father, and developed into the adult years with care and dedication. He was the Son of God, and controlled His physical realm as maturity prepared Him for the cross. We all must use our bodies to please Christ, and not ourselves or man. The strength of your body is vital to the strength of your service. Think right, act, right, and you will be right. (3). **Social:** "*And whatsoever ye do in word and deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*" Col. 3:17. Oh how often have I preached "We may be the only Bible our sinner friends will read." A true child of God will remember we too were sinners and how great it is to be redeemed. Our relationship to others is vital to our testimony and their salvation. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. Join nothing that is anti God or seeks to major in anything that is immoral, or injurious to others. Your attire and where you go and to what you belong is a social issue. Christ was careful, but even then was accused by the religious leaders around him. We Christians are not alone on an island. We live in a world with sinners all around us. At work, or school or wherever we live among others, we must socially point them to Christ. We must pattern our lives after Christ. The old

hymn says, "I would be like Jesus." There was a fourth element in the maturing of the Son of God. (4). **Spiritual:** "*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*" I Pet. 3:18. As Christ matured in the body, He sensed He must be about His Fathers business. He spent hours and hours preaching why He had come. He cared for the needs of people around Him and healed many. He retired to a desert place to spend time in prayer, and never once veered from the reason He had been born. He was totally invested, as the Son of God, in the will of His Father. Every Christian on earth has a purpose for being, and a job to be done for our Father. If you really desire to advance into victorious adulthood then follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Never tire of the things we are told to do as God's children. Be known as people of great character, and manifest your love for Christ in faithful service. Be faithful to every service at your church and be a witness for Christ wherever you go. Spiritual growing doesn't happen in an instant but must be the focus of your life every day. This process must begin in your youth. "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them:*" Ecc. 12:1. If you're reading or hearing these words, be sure you are totally surrendered as a child of God, a developing soldier enlisted for a lifetime. Guard your body, hating all that hinders, and treasuring all that grows your potential. Avoid the peer pressure temptations to waste your youth in anything that matters not in the light of eternity. Walk among your friends as visual evidence to the lost around you. Start doing things for the Lord at an early age and never slow down. Keep on keeping on and you will soon be an adult. "*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*" Eph. 4:15. Come on everyone...Grow Up!.